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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: CODEL PAYNE'S MEETING WITH LAGOS STATE GOVERNOR
FASHOLA

REF: ABUJA 1876

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Recently-installed Lagos State Governor Babatunde Fashola told HIRC Africa Subcommittee Chair Donald Payne August 21 he was determined to improve Lagos's miserable physical condition. Roads, power, water, and sanitation were in a shocking state and totally inadequate to cope with Lagos's population of 17 million. Fashola focused particularly on the deteriorating crime and security situation, blaming the federal government for not providing enough resources for police services and to alleviate poverty. Fashola said as a new governor he was determined to make improvements during his tenure, even if he broke some crockery, adding he did not care if he got re-elected. He appealed for USG help in resources for the police. End summary.

¶2. (U) In a brief private meeting with Congressman Payne and Acting CG McConnell following a ceremonial welcome, exchange of gifts and media encounter, Lagos State Governor Fashola emphatically stressed his determination to make a difference during his time as governor, even if it meant he would not get re-elected.

¶3. (SBU) Fashola said basic infrastructure had been allowed to deteriorate to a shocking degree-roads, sewers, power, water, etc. Meanwhile the population had burgeoned to over 17 million, a figure which he said was carefully calculated by various indices such as the amount of refuse produced daily. The official figure of 9 million was used by federal authorities as a convenient excuse to minimize Lagos's needs.

¶4. (U) Fashola said his first priority however was to improve security in Lagos which had also deteriorated badly. He blamed the situation in part on the previous government policy of not providing police with sufficient resources and training. Poverty, lack of job opportunities, and soldiers returning from UN peacekeeping missions who marauded were also factors.

¶5. (U) Acting CG McConnell welcomed the Governor's priority on addressing the problem of crime. He expressed concern about security for Americans and other expatriates in Lagos, noting his British counterpart had recently contacted him with a similar concern. The USG would help where it could and would like to stay in close touch with the Governor on security.

¶6. (U) Fashola urged the US to press the federal government in Abuja on the need to provide more resources to Lagos. At present 52 percent of Nigeria's revenue is taken by the federal government leaving only 48 percent for Nigeria's 36 states and many municipalities. Fashola said he would welcome any help the U.S. could give, citing the need for bulletproof vests as well as walkie-talkies and other communications gear for the police.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: Governor Fashola is starting off with enthusiasm and zeal. His challenge will be to maintain that commitment over time in the face of the daunting problems of Lagos and the culture of corruption to which a number of other governors have succumbed. End comment.

¶8. (U) CODEL Payne cleared this cable.
MCCONNELL